

Project Summary

Dreampast is an online game in which players guess the history of San Francisco people, places, and things. In Dreampast, players construct a virtual historic San Francisco. While the virtual world is being constructed, players learn about real historic San Francisco, and how the intertwining threads of fact, fiction and fantasy merge to create the city's identity.

The game begins with a set of quirky local history questions paired with images and maps. Players can submit their own fictional answers to these questions in the form of text, images, audio and video. After users have submitted at least four fictional histories, the question is added to the game. Players then read through both the fictional and real answers and vote on the one that they believe to be correct. They are awarded points for voting on the correct answer (the real history), and for tricking other players with their answers (their fictional histories). The object of the game is to score the most points. To do so, players will be delving deeper and deeper into the fascinating histories of which the San Francisco Historical Society is the caretaker.

Dreampast is based on the word game Dictionary (sometimes known as Balderdash). Instead of creating fake definitions for obscure words, players create fictional histories for obscure people, places and things. Because the game is online, players are not limited to text-only definitions, as they are in Dictionary. The histories that players create will be rich multimedia presentations limited only by their imagination and creativity.

The end product will be a lively website full of user-generated content that forms a rich vision of San Francisco's multitude of fantastical micro-histories. The website will represent a virtual historic San Francisco comprised of both real history and our dreamed, idealized, imagined history. We feel that this accurately represents the role of history in a "city of dreamers."

The website will act as a social network allowing users to create personal profiles and interact with each other through voting and commenting. The website will also interact with other popular social networks such as Facebook. It will be entertaining to browse and will encourage both casual and in-depth participation. It will be easy to join and players will always have a clear idea of activities available for them to do.

All the player scores will be tracked in real-time on a leaderboard page. Players will be able to easily compare themselves to friends and strangers playing the game. We will give out weekly awards for the top overall player of the week, the top fictional history creator of the week, and the top question answerer of the week. We will also show the running total scores toward the overall winner at the end of the six weeks. The scoring system will encourage and reward those players who put the effort in to create convincing fictional histories. Players will receive bonus points each time that they receive votes on their fictional histories, making it worthwhile to put in the time and

creative energy necessary to make interesting content. However, casual players will be able to win as the top question answerer by selecting the most real histories, without having to make any deep commitment to do so. This point structure ensures that many people who desire different levels of engagement will be satisfied with this game experience, while also learning a great deal about the history of San Francisco.

The questions in **Dreampast** will focus on the type of history that the San Francisco Historical Society works to preserve and share. Some will ask players what was accomplished by little-known people who played a big part in San Francisco's past. Others will ask them about the origins and uses of historic buildings. Still others will focus in on recent history and be generated from on-site interviews with and photographs of local shopkeepers, politicians, municipal employees and more. The fictional histories that players generate in response to these questions will make it interesting for anyone to engage with the real history. Frequently, the truth will be stranger than fiction, and the players will have a "wow" moment when they see the correct answer.

To produce them, we will consult with the experts at the San Francisco Historical Society, as well as with the San Francisco Historical Society's archives and records. We will create simple and effective administrative tools on the website so that anyone will be able to upload questions along with the correct history for our review. We will challenge players to go out and find interesting and unknown San Francisco histories, and to become investigators themselves. The game-within-a-game of creating questions with historically accurate answers will produce new historical content for the Historical Society and will give people a forum to act as historians.

We will use the Mint Building for the basis for some of the questions, as well as for the staging area for any live game events. Because it is rich in history yet anonymous to many San Franciscans who pass by it each day, it will serve as a great venue for any **Dreampast** event.

The website will be designed to appeal to anyone, whether or not they have an interest in online games. The first page that anyone sees will have a question that they can answer right away along with a simple sign-up area and information about the game and the San Francisco Historical Society. Thus, upon their very first view of the webpage, casual web surfers will be immediately engaged with the game, as well as acquainted with the concept for the project and the Historical Society.

Dreampast will be promoted, in part, by an innovative local viral marketing campaign in San Francisco. Questions connected to San Francisco people, places and things will be distributed in the appropriate locations to spark interest in the project. The questions will direct participants to the **Dreampast** website and encourage them to create their own answers. The campaign will reinforce the local aspect of the project and help insure that a diverse group of people play the game.

Project Goals

1. Engage a large young audience and convince them to sign up and create content.
2. Promote the San Francisco Historical Society and the Mint Project.
3. Get people excited about local San Francisco history.
4. Demonstrate that history is relevant today by showing players that San Francisco's past is linked to its present by historical narratives.

Why Dreampast Will Work

1. It's fun! Coming up with stories that answer **Dreampast's** questions will be enjoyable in and of itself, and will be even better when other players choose them as the real history. Even if players do not want to produce stories, it will be fun to read (and watch, and listen to) other players' stories, along with the real ones. Because San Francisco's history is so rich and varied, it will be an interesting challenge to figure out what is real and what isn't! Dedicated players will be able to compete for the high score and top spot on the leaderboard. They will be motivated to create wonderful and convincing fictions for the purpose of scoring points.
2. It will be easy to understand. It's based on a game (Dictionary/Balderdash) that most people are already familiar with. Even for those unfamiliar with those games, the concept is simple to explain and even easier to grasp with gameplay examples.
3. Players can be a part of **Dreampast** on four different levels of engagement, and the game will be very inclusive as a result. Players can simply *browse* without signing up, they can sign-up and *vote*, they can *answer questions with fictional histories*, and they can *create questions with real histories*. Different users will want different experiences, and **Dreampast** will provide meaningful gameplay options for all. Some players will want to dive right in and start uploading content, but others will want to be able to participate as critical observers who contribute through their votes and comments. Since casual players will be able to simply sign-up and vote on histories, they can have fun without having to generate any unique content. In fact, one of them might be able to win the high score for choosing the most real history answers.

Because one of the goals of this project is to engage many players in a six-week period of time, the game must be immediately accessible. **Dreampast** will be successful because it's fun, it's easy to understand, and it offers many ways to play.

Budget

\$75,000 budget

Our proposal for pay dates, amounts paid and deliverables is below.

February 1st - \$10k

- Proposal approved and work begins

March 1st - \$10k

- Website plan
- Design/concept document

April 1st - \$10k

- Site design
- Wireframes to programmer
- Website copy
- Promotions plan draft

May 1st - \$15k

- Preliminary site
- Finish Q's & A's

June 1st - \$10k

- Website release candidate 1 (RC1)
- Promotions launch

July 1st (launch) - \$10k

- Final website
- Final content

August 15th (completion) - \$10k